



Bard College Conservatory of Music

Celebrating 20 Years of Music, Vision, and Excellence

Presents

Whispers of Late Brahms

Mohammad AbdNikfarjam, *clarinet*

Tuesday, May 19, 2026, at 4:00pm
László Z. Bitó '60 Conservatory Building, Performance Space

Clarinet Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, op. 120, no. 1

Allegro appassionato
Andante un poco adagio
Allegretto grazioso
Vivace

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Hasti Safaei, *piano*

— INTERMISSION —

Clarinet Quintet in B Minor, op. 115

Allegro
Adagio
Andantino
Con moto

Katherine Chernyak, *violin*
Elizabeth Chernyak, *violin*
Kuang Zhou, *viola*
Raman Ramakrishnan, *cello*

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Mohammad AbdNikfarjam is an Iranian clarinetist currently based in New York. He is pursuing a Master of Music at the Bard College Conservatory of Music, where he studies with the renowned clarinetist David Krakauer and Pascual Martínez-Forteza of the New York Philharmonic. He previously completed the Advanced Performance Studies program at Bard and holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Tehran.

AbdNikfarjam has distinguished himself as both a soloist and orchestral musician. He is the winner of the Bard Conservatory Concerto Competition (2024) and has appeared as a soloist with the Bard Conservatory Orchestra under Tan Dun, performing Debussy's *Première Rhapsodie*. In Iran, he has appeared as a soloist with several orchestras, including a performance of Weber's Clarinet Concerto No. 1 with the Garousman Orchestra. He has also served as principal clarinet with multiple orchestras in his country.

His orchestral engagements include collaborations with the Cleveland Orchestra under the baton of Hannu Lintu, as well as performances with The Orchestra Now under Leon Botstein. As a chamber musician, he won first prize at the Saba Music Festival with his chamber group, and as a soloist, he won first prize at the Art and Culture Festival.

AbdNikfarjam has appeared in major concert venues including Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and Blossom Music Center. He has participated in leading international festivals such as the AIMS Festival Orchestra (Spain), the Fadjr International Music Festival, the Imani Winds Chamber Music Festival at the Juilliard School, and the Kent Blossom Music Festival. He has also participated in two summer programs at the Curtis Institute of Music.

In addition to his performance career, he has been active as a teacher, having served as a clarinet instructor at the Tehran Conservatory of Music.

Hasti Safaei is an Iranian pianist currently studying at Bard Conservatory, where she works with Rieko Aizawa and Frank Corliss. She earned her Bachelor of Music from the University of Tehran and her Master of Music in Piano Performance from Texas Tech University, where she studied Daniel del Pino.

As both a soloist and collaborative pianist, Hasti has performed a wide range of repertoire spanning solo piano literature, chamber music, and collaborative works with instrumentalists and singers. She is particularly passionate about chamber music and enjoys the artistic dialogue and shared musical expression that collaborative performance offers.

Hasti has participated in several internationally recognized festivals and training programs, including the AIMS Festival in Spain, the Imani Winds Chamber Music Festival, the Kent Blossom Music Festival, the Kurtág Festival at Bard College, and programs at the Curtis Institute of Music. Through these programs, she has had the opportunity to work closely with leading performers, chamber musicians, and pedagogues while refining her artistry in both solo and ensemble settings.

Katherine Chernyak is currently in the advanced Performance studies program at Bard Conservatory. She has performed in venues like Carnegie Hall, MET Museum in New York, and National Cathedral in DC. She is a substitute player with the Orchestra Now and is a participant of the New York City Orchestra Project. Katherine was a youth mentor at NOI in 2024, teaches locally, and is currently a member of Bard Conservatory's Music Mentorship Initiative, teaching children in Kenya. Katherine has been principal viola of the Bard Conservatory Orchestra and concertmaster of ensembles such as Bard Baroque Ensemble and the East West Ensemble. She is currently a finalist in the Lowell Chamber Orchestra Competition and received honorable mention in the Yamaha Young Artist Competition (2026). She enjoys playing contemporary music and has worked with Joan Tower. In the summer of 2025, Katherine joined the East West Ensemble on their first tour to China. Katherine studies with Luosha Fang and Melissa Reardon, and received her bachelor's degrees in biology and violin performance at Bard.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Elizabeth Chernyak is a Canadian violinist and violist studying with Luosha Fang and Melissa Reardon at Bard College Conservatory of Music. Her other primary teachers include Uli Speth, Daniel Phillips and Marka Gustavsson. She completed her bachelor's degrees in violin performance and biology in 2024 and will receive her Advanced Performance Studies certificate in 2026. Chernyak has attended Colorado College, Meadowmount, Eastern, Round Top, Encore, Borromeo, and Music Mountain Summer Festivals and the New York String Orchestra Seminar, and will attend Sarasota and Kneisel Hall music festivals this summer. Chernyak is passionate about new music and has collaborated with Sō Percussion, Joan Tower, Tan Dun, the Sinfonietta Project, China Now Festival at Carnegie Hall, Kurtag Festival, and Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard to program concerts with contemporary music and have premiered the works of many emerging composers including Steven Bonacci and John Brockett. Chernyak's other interests include conducting, composition, arts administration, ultimate frisbee, and teaching. She will be attending the Juilliard School this fall to pursue her masters in viola performance, studying with Hsin-Yun Huang.

Kuang Zhou is a Chinese violist currently pursuing a Master of Music at the Bard College Conservatory of Music, where he studies with Melissa Reardon. His previous teachers include Dapeng Sun. Zhou received his Bachelor of Arts in Music Performance from East China Normal University in 2024.

As a soloist, Zhou has performed Telemann's Viola Concerto in G major with The Orchestra Now under Leon Botstein, and Walton's Viola Concerto with the ECNU Symphony Orchestra. He has served as principal violist of the Bard College Conservatory Orchestra and the ECNU Symphony Orchestra, working with conductors including Tan Dun. His chamber music work has been recognized with the Highest Honor at the Schubert International Music Competition.

Zhou has participated in festivals including the Green Lake Festival of Music and the Hangzhou Liangzhu International String Festival. In addition to performance, he is engaged in research on historically informed approaches to Bach's Cello Suites on viola and has written program notes connecting musical analysis with broader audiences.

His interdisciplinary interests include sound design, digital media, and AI-related artistic production, with professional experience at Huawei Technologies.

Cellist **Raman Ramakrishnan** enjoys performing chamber music, old and new, around the world. For two decades, as a founding member of the Horszowski Trio and the Daedalus Quartet, he toured extensively through North and South America, Europe, and Asia, and recorded for Bridge Records and Avie Records, including the complete piano trios of Robert Schumann and the complete string quartets of Fred Lerdahl. Mr. Ramakrishnan is currently an artist member of the Boston Chamber Music Society, and is on the faculty of the Bard College Conservatory of Music.

Mr. Ramakrishnan has given solo recitals in New York, Boston, Seattle, and Washington, D.C., and has performed at Caramoor, at Bargemusic, with the Chicago Chamber Musicians, and at the Aspen, Bard, Charlottesville, Four Seasons, Kingston, Lincolnshire (UK), Marlboro, Mehli Mehta (India), Oklahoma Mozart, Portland, Skaneateles, and Vail Music Festivals. He has toured with Musicians from Marlboro and has performed, as guest principal cellist, with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. As a guest member of Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble, he has performed in New Delhi and Agra, India and in Cairo, Egypt. He has served on the faculties of the Kneisel Hall, Norfolk, and Taconic Chamber Music Festivals, as well as in the Music Performance Program of Columbia University.

Mr. Ramakrishnan was born in Athens, Ohio and grew up in East Patchogue, New York. He holds a Bachelor's degree in physics from Harvard University and a Master's degree in music from The Juilliard School. His principal teachers have been Fred Sherry, Andrés Díaz, and André Emelianoff. He plays a Neapolitan cello made by Vincenzo Jorio in 1837.